

## Reconnaissance in the Coast Range of British Columbia

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UNTIL a few years ago the Coast Range of British Columbia was not thought to contain any peaks comparable with the principal summits of the Canadian Rockies and Selkirks. In 1922 Capt. R. P. Bishop climbed a peak near the south end of Chilko Lake, Mt. Good Hope (10,670 feet) from which he saw and photographed toward the northwest two outstanding mountains never previously reported. The higher of these peaks he estimated at about 13,000 feet. V. Dolmage in his 1924 report of field work in this same district also hints at a 13,000-foot peak and actually uses that figure on his accompanying map, but not in its correct location.

In June, 1925, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Don Munday of Vancouver, from Mt. Arrowsmith in Vancouver Island, in clear weather, saw to the north of them on the mainland a very high peak which so excited their curiosity that they started later the same summer to try to locate and if possible reach this mysterious peak. The highest mountain which they then saw was not the same peak which Bishop had seen in 1922. In September, 1925, they went by boat to the head of Bute Inlet, 125 miles north of Vancouver, climbed Mt. Rodney (7,843 feet) and looked toward the region surrounding "Mystery" Mountain. In the early summer of 1926 they returned to Bute Inlet with a larger party, worked their way up the difficult Homathko River for thirty miles and up a westerly tributary creek, thence up on to snowfields and glaciers until they stood at 10,000 feet, at the base of a peak only three or four miles to the southeast of "Mystery" Mountain itself, which they found to be a startling gray granite mass surmounted by a slender summit tower, the whole rising from glaciers and snowfields of entirely unexpected vastness.

This route of approach had proved so difficult and dangerous that in 1927 the Mundays went to the head of Knight Inlet, some distance farther up the coast from Vancouver, and luckily found, only seven miles from and five hundred feet above tidewater, a huge glacier, which they were able to follow up for twenty-five

miles until they were on the main ridge of "Mystery" Mountain just west of the summit. They climbed until turned back by a storm at 11,500 feet. In 1928, by the same route, they reached the northwest summit, a snow arête, but were unable to attempt the higher slender eastern pinnacle which was separated from them by a gap and looked, as it had from the opposite side in 1926, excessively difficult and inaccessible. All of these valiant attempts and subsequent trips to the Franklin Glacier basin have been covered by Mr. Munday in several articles, with fine photographs and a map, published in the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, and also in a summary article in the December, 1932, issue of the *Canadian Geographical Journal*.

"Mystery" Mountain has been officially named Mt. Waddington by the Geographic Board of Canada, after Alfred Waddington who in 1864 tried to construct a wagon road from Bute Inlet up the Homathko River valley through the range to the interior. The twin peak to Mt. Waddington, which Bishop also saw in 1922, and which in his photograph shows distinctly just to the right, has been named Mt. Tiedemann after H. O. Tiedemann, who was Waddington's engineer.

There are still large areas in the Coast Range, itself nearly five hundred miles long and from seventy-five to one hundred miles wide between the United States and Alaska boundaries, which remain to this day almost, if not entirely, unknown. In this long stretch there are but few natural passes through the range. Railroads cross it in three places: The Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, by the Fraser Gorge just north of the international boundary; the Pacific Great Eastern, sixty miles north of the Canadian Pacific; and the Canadian National (formerly the Grand Trunk Pacific) by the Skeena River, fifty miles south of the Alaska boundary. Between the P. G. E. and the C. N. R., a distance of four hundred miles, there are no routes of travel through the range except the road up the Bella Coola valley which, so far, is only connected with the interior road by a stretch of fifty miles of horse trail. The Indians have ways of crossing the mountains by arduous foot routes. The several rivers which flow from the interior to the inlets of the Pacific are useless for navigation, even by canoe, being broken by falls, rapids and canyons. Sections of the range in the vicinity of Chilko Lake, the Southgate and Homathko rivers, have recently been seen from

the air. The area between the Klinaklini and Bella Coola rivers, some four or five thousand square miles, is unknown back of the inlets which penetrate it, except perhaps for one or two old Indian routes.

The core of the Coast Range is a granite batholith forced up millions of years ago through the overlying sandstones, limestones, slates and volcanic rocks. The granite formation begins at the coast and occupies all but a strip about twenty-five miles wide along the northeastern edge of the range. Precipitation in the Coast Range is unusually heavy, varying from seventy-five to over two hundred inches a year. As most of this occurs in the winter months, the snowfall above three or four thousand feet is enormous, and results in such glaciers as the Franklin, Scimitar and Tiedemann of the Waddington group, respectively twenty-five, eighteen and fifteen miles in length and flowing from snowfields several hundred square miles in extent.

If it were not for the weather generally encountered in the range, considerably less favorable to the mountaineer than that of the Rockies or the Alps, great things might soon be expected of it as a climbing area. The weather is perhaps similar to that of the better known New Zealand Alps. In both occur occasionally stretches of very fine weather of several days duration, but always there is the possibility of an almost hourly change from brilliance to storm. These sudden changes come, as far as the climber who may be many hours from camp is concerned, almost wholly without warning, and he must *always* be prepared for rain, hail, snow, lightning and wind on the finest day.

I have made three short trips of reconnaissance into the range, first in September, 1931, and again in July and August, 1932.

In 1931, with a chance acquaintance made at Lake Louise, an Englishman, Sir Norman J. Watson, I took the P. G. E. to Williams Lake, and luckily secured a ride from there one hundred and seventy miles west by the only road, on the semi-monthly motor mail stage, to Tatla and One-Eye lakes. With a local man, Pete McCormick, and an Indian, we made a short pack trip of six days, mostly above timber-line, to a point overlooking the north fork of the Homathko River (also known as Moseley Creek), above Middle Lake. After waiting for five hours one day and eight hours the day after in a cold north wind on a small rock peak at about 7,700 feet, I had a five minutes' view through

a rift in the clouds of what I felt sure was the main Waddington group about twenty-nine miles away. That was enough.

In July, 1932, I took the small but comfortable steamer *Venture* of the Union S. S. Company, up the coast two hundred and seventy-five miles north from Vancouver, a thirty-three hours' sail to Bella Coola, at the head of Burke Channel. Bella Coola was the point at which Alexander Mackenzie in 1793 reached the Pacific, the first white man to cross the North American continent. My object on this trip was to find out what I could of the mountains between the Dean and the Klinaklini rivers, and particularly about one peak between the Bella Coola and Klinaklini which I had heard of in 1931, and which was apparently identical with the recently named Mt. Monarch (11,714 feet). The weather, as in 1931, was against me, but I did succeed, after one false start, in reaching the base of Mt. Monarch, probably, next to the Waddington massif, the finest peak in the Coast Range.

From Bella Coola, where Pete McCormick met me, we drove by car the forty odd miles to Stuie, the scene of a summer Indian encampment, where there is just being completed a hunting lodge by two young Englishmen, Arnold and Walker. Stuie is at the junction of the Talchako, a white glacial stream, coming in from the south, and the main Bella Coola River. Up the Talchako valley there is visible a peak which I have good reason to believe is Monarch. Pete and I spent six days in an unsuccessful attempt to reach it by the high ground between the Talchako and Atnarko rivers, the latter, the next more easterly tributary of the Bella Coola, really its main source.

Returning to Stuie we set out again, this time east through the range up the Hotnarko valley, past Anahim Lake, thence south and striking west again into the range past the southern shore of Kappan Lake (also called Charlotte Lake). By the fifth day from Stuie, the day after passing Kappan Lake, we came to the edge of the great north-south trench, 4,000 feet deep, of the north fork of the Klinaklini and the Atnarko. These rivers rise at the south and north ends, respectively, of Knot Lake (about 2,000 feet), an unofficial name used locally because of its bowknot shape. The lake is not yet shown on any map that I have had reference to. Across the lake and not more than six or eight miles back of it, towers Mt. Monarch, its summit

rising nine or ten thousand feet above. The three days at this camp were used to climb once to 8,000 feet for a view which, however, clouds largely obscured, and in walking some miles farther south for a different view of Monarch and down the north fork of the Klinaklini. The whole climb of Monarch from lake to summit will undoubtedly involve some days of back-packing and reconnaissance of routes, all of which appear long and difficult.

In two more days we were out of the mountains. After spending a night with Pete at his cabin on Fishtrap Lake, I was fortunate in finding a local man with a car who was willing to carry me the whole distance, two hundred and seventy-one miles, out to Ashcroft by way of the Gang Ranch, a trip on which, he and I taking turns at the wheel, spent about fourteen hours of hard driving over the rough mountain roads. I had left Vancouver July 5th and could have returned to it, the next morning, on the 25th.

Again, in August, I came to Ashcroft, met Hans Fuhrer from Jasper, and we drove that morning by the Cariboo road to Williams Lake by the mail stage; from there, after a session at the grocery store, we drove on in the afternoon to Alexis Creek, putting up for the night with the Tom Lees, and reached Tatla Lake the next morning, making further purchases of food at Graham's store and spending the night with him.

The next seventeen days from Tatla Lake and back was to be spent traveling by trail and otherwise down the Homathko (Moseley Creek) to have a close view if possible of Waddington, and in making two or three ascents. These objects were all accomplished, in weather which though poor most of the time fortunately cleared on just the days most necessary for views. A trail goes as far as the west end of Middle Lake, thirty miles, taking one and a half long days. The next ten miles took two and a half days of trail cutting, wading in sloughs, river water, Twist Lake itself, and much hard work. We camped four nights on the north side of the river, near the first big southerly bend, and on the second important side creek below Twist Lake. From camp at 2,800 feet Hans and I on two days climbed high out of the valley on the north side, the first time to 8,300 feet, for a beautiful view of the Waddington group, of which all but the actual peak of Waddington itself was visible, being hidden behind

Tiedemann; and the second time across the same ridge and partly down into the valley, separating the ridge from the principal group of peaks. An intervening day was spent unsuccessfully in trying to cut a foot trail along the main valley into Scimitar Creek, the third below Twist Lake and the one which we were not able to reach from the ridge above, the day after.

Satisfied concerning the approaches to and climbing prospects in the main group from the east, I next decided to return up the Homathko and be sure of high viewpoints for a more extended sweep of the range to the southward. We came back a few miles beyond Twist Lake, turned south up a tributary stream for a day and a half and camped between a peak which I had named "Blackhorn" in 1931 (*ca.* 10,050 feet) and Mt. Razorback (10,667 feet), the latter the highest summit between the north and south forks of the Homathko. On August 24th and 26th Hans and I made first ascents of these two peaks, gaining from each in perfect weather absolutely clear views of the Coast Range: from beyond Chilko Lake to the southeast; south beyond the Southgate River; southwest to the Waddington massif, Waddington itself dominating the landscape above the other peaks which we had the week before seen only six miles away; northwest to Monarch; north and east to the rolling interior plateau country.

Here is an area of virgin peaks, many over 10,000 feet, several in the Waddington group over 11,000 and 12,000, Waddington itself 13,260 feet, nearly 300 feet higher than Robson, and Monarch standing out by itself to the northwest, which should soon become better known to those mountaineers who enjoy climbing in new rough country, partly unknown and almost wholly unmapped.

On the second afternoon from this camp we were back at Tatla Lake, and the next evening, after motoring 305 miles by way of Williams Lake, reached Ashcroft, which is on both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways.